

opposed to the maintenance of a respectable regularity—the group system is the more effective of the two. The leaders of political groups move along lines that are prescribed by self-interest. A group will generally be too small to dominate of itself the political situation ; but it can make terms with other groups. bargaining for mutual assistance ; and the simplicity of its purpose is of great advantage when opposed to the kaleidoscopic ambitions of a political party. So the group of Irish Nationalists has brought Home Rule almost within their grasp. the Welsh group has shaken the Established Church in Wales to its foundations. and the Labour group has forced legislation giving trades unions such privileges as are enjoyed by other associations.

Political forecasts are very uncertain. and there are peculiarities in the English character that may divert our political evolution from the lines that have been pursued by other nations. But it seems probable that the two historical parties will gradually be disintegrated out of existence by a growing cleavage of the electorate into class groups. As the working classes advance in intelligence and lose traditional habits of mind, they will appreciate their wants with greater clearness. and become less disposed to entrust their interests to politicians who regard them merely as pieces—of more or less value—to be played in the game of

party politics. Legislation will be urged by considerations of personal advantage—that is to say, in the interests of the class, instead of those of the political party—and it is probable that this will infuse a bitterer note into political antagonism. We must hope for a palliative in a growing respect for public opinion, in increasing obedience to that social impulse which leads us to defer to the